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CIA/CR /77-15826 M

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Jorge Rafael VIDELA
(Phonetic: veeDEHla)

ARGENTINA

President; Member, Ruling Junta; Commander in Chief of the Army

Addressed as:
Mr. President

On 24 March 1976 Army Commander Lt. Gen. Jorge Videla led a long-awaited, bloodless coup against the government of President María de Perón. Five days later he was installed as Argentina's 39th President. As such, he performs all the ceremonial duties of Chief of State, but he shares supreme governing authority with the other members of the three-man military junta, which represents the three services.

The junta inherited a country in near chaos, with uncontrolled inflation and rampant terrorist activity. Under its leadership, both problems have been significantly reduced, although not eliminated. The President travels extensively in Argentina and has met privately with representatives of the religious, scientific, business and rural communities, as well as with members of the press. He has also made several trips to other South American countries to strengthen relations. Videla came to the United States several times before becoming President. In September 1977 he visited this country for the signing of the Panama Canal Treaties.

Videla is a man of great integrity who loathes corruption and will not tolerate any degree of it in his government. He is a deeply religious man and serves as a lay reader in his hometown Catholic parish. The President, 52, is married and has seven children. He speaks poor English.

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